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AUTHOR Heidel, Stephen; Kunde, Brenda; Martin, Esther
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ABSTRACT

This action research project sought to decrease the number of late or missing homework assignments among fourth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders in two schools near large urban communities. Survey data showed that over 75 percent of teachers polled considered late or missing assignments to be a problem. Several strategies were implemented, including: (1) contact by telephone or note with parents on a weekly basis, stressing both positive and negative behaviors by students and their status with late or missing assignments; (2) a full-class incentive program to encourage students to turn in homework on time; and (3) "targeted homework" approaches. Post-intervention parent and student surveys reflected an overall positive change in students' attitudes toward school and an incremental decline in late or missing assignments as additional programs were implemented. (Nine appendices contain program surveys, worksheets, and other materials. Contains 11 references.) (EV)

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PROMOTING PARENTAL POWER: ENHANCING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

Stephen Heidel
Brenda Kunde
Esther Martin

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This project was approved by

Charles J. Mica
Advisor

Patricia E. Wengrow
Advisor

Beverly J. Sullivan
Dean, School of Education

ABSTRACT

Parental power is gained by increasing communications between parent and school. This communication empowers parents to improve their child's opportunity for academic success. The authors attempted to achieve a decrease in the number of late/missing homework assignments from over first and second quarter records for fourth, seventh, and eighth graders in both suburban and rural schools. Survey data (showed) that over 75% of the teachers polled considered late/missing assignments to be a problem.

Several strategies were implemented to decrease the number of late/missing assignments for the targeted students. Contact by telephone and/or note reached parents on a weekly basis. This communication stressed both positive/negative behaviors and their child's status of late/missing assignments. A second strategy called for writing daily homework assignments in a highly visible location, and teachers verbally reminded students to write the assignment in their assignment notebook. A full-class incentive program was also implemented to encourage students to turn homework in on time. Finally, the targeted schools also required that mid-term grades be sent to parents for students at risk of failing for the quarter.

Parent and student surveys reflected that the overall change of student's attitudes toward school was positive. Additionally, the number of late/missing assignments reflected an incremental decline as additional programs were implemented. These results were due in part to involvement, which appears to be a manifestation of parental devotion and confidence in their children.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Many educators tend to agree that lack of contact between parents and teachers not only has a detrimental effect upon the educational process, but affects the attitudinal responses of children as well. This contributes to several problems, e.g., poor attitudinal behavior, attendance, missing/late homework, and lower academic achievement. The intent of this study, therefore, was to enhance the frequency of positive contacts between parents and teachers in anticipation that collective involvement would better shape students' attitudes toward homework and school.

National Context

The lack of teacher-parent communication is not problematic in just the schools in question, but manifestations of the problem appear nationally. Henderson and Berla (1994), confirm that parent involvement makes an enormous impact upon students' attitude, attendance, and academic achievement. Additionally, Cooper, et al. (1998) state that parental involvement improves students' study skills, increases students' comprehension of factual information, and develops students' self-direction and responsibility.

"It takes a village to raise a child" (Rodham-Clinton, 1996, p. 12). The First Lady dreams of the United States adopting this quote. Teachers play an important role in the "village." It is the responsibility of teachers to prepare the youth of America for their future roles in our country. Emphasis has recently been placed upon parents to become involved in their child's educational success. Collaboration between parents/guardians and teachers is an essential tool for ensuring a positive learning experience. Students' personal worth increases as they see the partnership grow between school and home. In addition, students come to the realization that they are unable to play one against another. Thus, students understand the

message that 'earning is crucial (NJEA Review, 1998). A study completed by Black, (1997, p.37) stated, "teachers blamed the kids, kids blamed the teachers, parents blamed everyone, and the administrators were tired of playing referee." This statement reflects a perspective that we still see in schools today. Communication between all parties is vital to close the gap between all parties concerned.

The implications for schools are apparent. It is a necessity in today's times to involve all parents in the educational process. "Sixty-three percent of U.S. adults believe schools and parents should share responsibility equally for children's social and personal development, 34 percent believe parents should take greater responsibility than schools, but only three percent think schools should do more than the home" (Bushweller, 1996, p. 13). One major educational goal should be to involve parents in the educational process. In recent studies it has been found that "parents want to be involved" (Hollifield, 1995, p. 50). While parents may want to become involved, many do not know how to take the initial steps to work hand-in-hand with their schools. According to Hollifield, three major problematic situations contribute to decreased participation. These problems are:

- Students believe teachers think schoolwork should not be discussed at home.
- Most homework is intended to be done independently.
- As students get older, many parents feel incompetent when assisting them.

In addition, parents feel frustrated because schools do not seem to know their children. "The harsh truth is ...that car mechanics often know more about the automobiles entering their shops than educators know about children who enroll in school" (Pathways Home Page, 1999, p.5). Most schools have at least some parental involvement regarding homework completion; however, this project will attempt to steadily improve the degree and depth for the targeted sites.

School Demographics

School Site A is located near a relatively large urban community. Recently Site A has changed from a rural farming community to a suburban-collar community. Site A is located in one of the highest income sections in the surrounding area. School Site B is located near a large urban community. Currently Site B is changing from a predominately rural community to a semi-suburban community. Site B is located approximately 10 miles west of a lower class community. School Site C is located 15 miles west of a relatively large suburban area. Site C remains a relatively consistent rural setting.

CHARACTERISTICS	SITE A	SITE B	SITE C
Population	15,000	7,926	6,500
Community	Suburban	Rural	Suburban
Ethnic Background (%)			
♦ White	86.4	98.0	89.6
♦ African-American	3.0	1.0	0.4
♦ Hispanic	8.2	0.6	9.3
♦ Asian	0.8	0.4	0.6
♦ Native American	0.6	0.0	0.1

Figure 1: Community Demographics

School Site A is a third through fifth grade elementary building that houses 442 students. Approximately 90 percent of these students are bused from neighboring communities and rural areas. School Site B is a sixth through twelfth grade building that houses 950 students. Approximately 70 percent of the students from this site are bussed from rural areas. School Site C is a fifth through eighth grade building that houses 503 students. Approximately 65 percent of these students are bused from neighboring communities and rural areas.

CHARACTERISTICS	SITE A	SITE B	SITE C
District Enrollment	1,680	1,617	1,143
School Enrollment	442	408	503
Student-Teacher Ratio	15.1:1	22.2:1	22.7:1
Student Ethnic Background (%)			
♦ White	90.7	98.0	88.9
♦ African-American	1.4	0.8	0.6
♦ Hispanic	5.5	0.8	9.1
♦ Asian	2.1	0.4	0.6
♦ Native American	0.2	0.0	0.8
Class Size	23.3	26.8	30.8
Attendance (%)	95.9	95.6	95.7
Teacher Ethnic Background (%)			
♦ White	100.0	100.0	100.0
Teacher/Administration			
♦ Teacher Experience	8.2	13.6	12.1
♦ Masters Degree (%)	24.8	48.3	22.1
Instruction Expenditure Per Pupil (dollars)	2,764	2,904	2,057

Figure 2: School Demographics

Notable in the above graph is the student-teacher ratio, for the apparent discrepancy is explained by the fact that the special education and regular education are inclusive for Site A.

Summary

The intent of the study was to develop strategies that improved students' attitudinal behavior through multiple forms of parental contact. The following research explored strategies intended to improve students' academic success through open communication. Additionally, this study showed the need to implement different homework models to accommodate individual differences within the classroom.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Research Overview

Research has shown there are mixed views in relationship to the effects of assigning homework. According to Cooper, et al. (1998), homework assessment ranges from having negative effects, positive effects, or complex effects. However, research has also shown that the data compiled was sparse and inadequate for developing a sound conclusion. As Gardner (1999) states:

> The English and French met memorably on the battlefield of Agincourt. During the Civil War, the North and South shed fraternal blood at Gettysburg. For many parents and children, the encounter over homework bears the mark of a similar armed struggle: Who is in control? What weapons should be used? What are the spoils of victory, the costs of loss? And the ultimate question of warfare: What is it all for?
> (p. 54)

"How do educators justify assigning homework in the face of conflicting research results?" (Heitzmann, 1998, p.52) This question leads researchers to evaluate both methods and reasons for assigning homework daily. Heitzmann states that some teachers, students, and/or parents do not take homework seriously. Also, a significant number of students do not do their homework at all. Research reflects that generally, most students do complete their work; however, there are others that do little or nothing at all. Students that often choose to do no homework may develop a learned response to deficiencies in completing their work successfully at home (Cooper, 1999). As Cooper reports during his interview with Black (1997), he states that this deficiency causes students to feel overwhelmed and forces them to shut down. Not only has research shown that students "shut down," but it also reflects that parents become apprehensive and overwhelmed when they cannot help their child succeed. Homework often turns into a struggle between parent

and children and the fatigue from dealing with these situations day after day can pull on the fabric of families.

Homework can be seen from many different perspectives. One study incorporated views from teachers, parents, students, and administration and found that there is not one person who is at fault, but rather many different views as to the source of the problem (Black, 1997, p.37). Teachers believe that homework is valuable when it directly relates to the information covered in class.

Positive parental attitudes play a large part in shaping students' attitudes towards homework. Therefore, increasing parental involvement and improving their attitude towards homework may well provide noticeable benefits. Research clearly reflects that parents' attitudes regarding homework have a direct, positive effect on their children's attitudes and classroom achievement (Cooper, et al., 1998). As Gardner (1999) says, if families see homework as an occasion for energized action rather than angry reaction, homework can become a far more productive and even enjoyable activity (p. 62). Additionally, homework being completed on a timely basis helps to instill values such as persistence, diligence and delayed gratification by teaching students responsibility, a skill useful throughout a student's life.

A more complex look at homework reflects that attitudes among all parties involved affects the social structure within the family and school. David Kooyman, a parent, is quoted saying that "They have us hostage to homework. I'm 47 and I have 25 year old teachers telling me what to do with my home life" (Ratnesar, 1999, p. 59-60). Kooyman's frustration for "They" relates directly to the school system and its inability to meet the needs of his children. Yet parents like Kooyman want their children to perform well academically, but not at the expense of their own personal life. Research reflects that "the same parents who are complaining that they don't have enough family time would be really upset if their child didn't score well" (Considine,

as cited in Ratnesar, 1999, p. 60). Unfortunately, it seems that teachers underestimate the time it takes students to complete their homework. Research shows that time spent on homework has increased, as the following graph reflects (Cooper, et al., 1998; Ratnesar, 1999).

School Age	Minutes per week 1981	Minutes per week 1997	Increase % over time
6- 9 yrs. old	44	123	36
10-14 yrs. old	169	300	56

Figure 3: Homework Assignments, Time Spent

Research reflects that achievement for elementary grade students does not show a relationship between the amount of homework the child does and academic success. However, while children may not show immediate improvement, evidence suggests that homework helps them to develop effective study habits. This increases the likelihood of better completion rates and better grades as students progress to higher grades. Research shows that in upper elementary grades, student achievement was positively related to success, but was related only about half as much as those in the lower elementary grades (Cooper, et al., 1998). On the whole, American students still work less, play more and achieve less than many of their peers around the world (Ratnesar, 1999).

Attitudes play a dramatic role in determining behavior; attitudes about homework should be no different. However, over time, views have shifted cyclically from positive to negative and back again. Figure 4 (below), reflects attitudinal changes throughout the 20th Century.

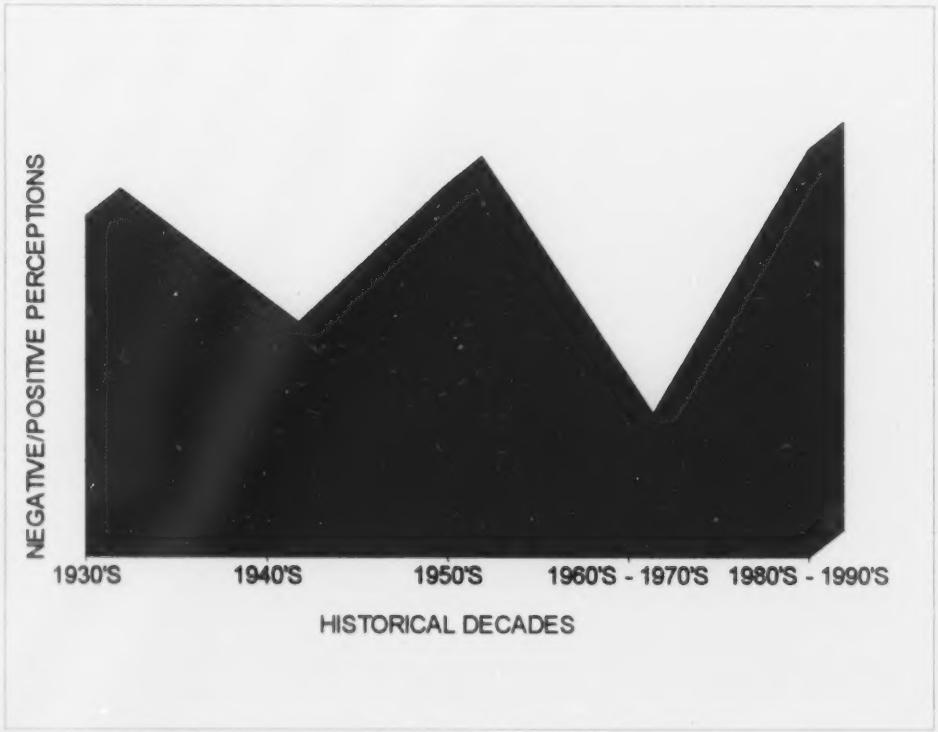

Figure 4: History of Homework

Over the past two centuries, parental involvement in American schools has fluctuated. In the early 19th century, the mind was viewed as a muscle that needed to be exercised mentally. Before education progressed into the Life Adjustment Movement (1940's), homework was used as a form of punishment. It shifted to developing problem solving abilities versus drill. As Elvis emerged (1950's), the trend reversed again. The Russians launched Sputnik and Americans felt the need to accelerate the pace of knowledge acquisition. The Age of the Aquarius (1960's), flower children brought on a free, inquiring spirit to schoolwork/homework. At this time, it was felt that there was too much pressure on students to achieve.

> In short, education is not just what happened in school; it takes place at home, on the street, in the wider community and especially nowadays as a result of daily exposure to the mass media. (Gardner, 1999, p. 62)

The amount of homework continues to increase for the student as we approach the 21st century. As we move into this new century, educators must be aware of the continued problems they are faced with: late/missing assignments, parental attitudes, and students' lack of motivation. Therefore, teachers must adapt their instructional methods to meet the needs of their students.

Probable Causes: Local

In an attempt to get a full picture of the problem at a local level, several different methods of documentation were employed. A motivational program has been implemented at Sites A, B, and C. This program consists of spelling out the letters H.O.M.E.W.O.R.K. P.A.R.T.Y, with each fully completed class assignment. Students must have full class participation daily to receive a letter. After all the letters have been put together to spell the phrase the class is rewarded with a party. All three sites have attempted this incentive program during the first quarter, but with minimal positive effect. No parties were awarded.

A survey was sent out to 79 teachers to summarize the problem at the local level (Appendix A). This survey revealed that late and missing work is a problem at both the elementary and middle school level. The following figure reflects the survey findings.

Problem Area	% Problem Yes	% Problem No
♦ Late Work	75	25
♦ Missing Work	86	14
Consequences	**% Teacher Intervention**	**% No Teacher Intervention**
♦ Parental Contact	42	58
♦ Student's grade affected by missing/late work	36	64

Figure 5: Teacher Survey: Strategies Implemented

The survey showed that there were many strategies used by teachers when applying a consequence to missing/late work. Teachers chose their own personal methods when dealing with this problem. District policies call for strict adherence to a specific number of late assignments prior to students receiving a zero. Before giving a zero, teachers are expected to make inquiries regarding the student's reasons for late/missing homework. However, informal inquiries reflect that most teachers follow a relaxed policy so students are not unduly penalized.

CONSEQUENCE	TEACHER RESPONSE PERCENT
Percentage grade loss	25
Zero's/No Credit	21
Loss of recess	31
After school restriction	3
Parental contact	15
No strategy	5

Figure 6: Missing and Late Work: Teacher Consequences

The researchers attempted to diminish the problem of missing/late homework by implementing strategies that target behaviors and attitudes which increase the likelihood of students handing in their work on time. The benefits from assigning homework are subject to at least some debate. Since all three targeted schools regularly assign and depend upon homework completion, it is imperative that students complete these assignments in a timely manner to increase the probability of success. This research project was intended to improve completion through enlisting parental participation and support.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The objective was to improve students' work habits through parental involvement. To document the extent of students' work habits, we compared first quarter's late/missing assignments to the results of second and third quarter's late/missing assignments. Parental opinions were surveyed regarding this study to see if they believed it improved their child's work habits. Additionally, students were surveyed for the same information over the course of the second quarter.

To pursue the overall problem the researchers developed multiple strategies to defuse the negative effects of missing/late homework. They targeted students from diverse backgrounds and implemented a program that utilized parental power. Also, they instituted a homework policy which more directly impacted students' daily lives than that of traditional homework.

Action Plan

A weekly system was developed to open communication between teacher and parent. This system incorporated weekly contact through various methods, such as sending a note home concerning both positive and negative behaviors. Additionally, parents were contacted via the telephone, both through personal conversations and through the answering machine. In addition, a Friday folder was sent home with all targeted fourth grade students commenting on their weekly behavior. This folder consisted of late/missing homework, concerns, and papers completed throughout the week.

In an attempt to change students' attitudes toward homework, the researchers developed targeted homework, which comprised 25% of the required daily work throughout the third quarter. This homework promotes student's understanding of newly introduced material to his or

her own personal lives. This method helps to give purpose and insight to materials covered in class, through a student-directed environment. Targeted homework is intended to enhance a positive atmosphere, which promotes a confident attitude, thereby increasing the likelihood of student success.

Additionally, homework was used as a tool to assist students with a more in-depth understanding of the material. This in-depth homework, known as targeted homework, peaked the child's interest and yielded higher percentages of completion. Research reflects that targeted homework encourages students to be motivated about the time they spend away from school doing out-of-class assignments (Heitzmann, 1998, p. 53). Key factors that distinguish the difference between traditional homework (e.g., assigning homework as an after-thought, rote memorization, defining terms, outlining a chapter, etc.), is that targeted homework employs the following purposes:

- Homework policy and teacher's personal policy is shared with parents/guardians and students.
- Assignments are targeted to meet individual needs and to meet their learning styles and abilities.
- Uses a large variety of challenging assignments, allowing for both individual and group work.

In employing targeted homework assignments, teachers develop and implement the following strategies:

- Be specific with directions and instructions for out-of-class assignments; provide rubrics for grading, along with written procedures as needed.
- Allow enough time so students can be successful with their final product.
- Provide responses on a timely basis for collected homework.
- Assess students' completion and performance of homework (Always checking; sometimes grading.)

- Hold students responsible for completion of homework.
- Start assignments in class until more positive habits are formed by students who have chronic late/missing work

(Heitzmann, 1998, p. 53).

Motivational Program

The program that was instituted at each site during the first quarter consisted of spelling out the letters H.O.M.E.W.O.R.K P.A.R.T.Y., with each fully completed class assignment. The researcher's theory behind this program was that peer pressure would play an integral part in assisting their fellow classmates to comply with class standards. Less than 100% participation caused the class to forego the letter for the day and increase peer pressure for students who did not comply. For the class to receive a letter, 100% of the students had to finish their assignments on time. Upon completion of 13 timely assignments, the students were eligible to be awarded with a party to celebrate.

Parental Contact

Researchers, at all three sites, contacted parents consistently to open communication between school and parents. This new method was introduced in the second quarter in conjunction with the "homework party" to promote parental involvement along with peer pressure. This strategy continued throughout the third quarter. The researcher's goal was to increase the percentage of students who completed their work on time by adding an element of indirect pressure. They used several methods when making contact-e.g., Friday folders, personal contact, phone, or written notice. Site A used the Friday folders because this site dealt with a younger group of students. The folder tracked and notified parents weekly, if needed, regarding both negative and positive situations that arose throughout the week. Additionally, Site A and the other two sites used the other methods for notification of parents.

Targeted Homework

Lastly, the researchers tried to increase the student's participation rate by issuing targeted homework in the third quarter, in conjunction with the other two methods already implemented. Targeted homework utilized "real-life" situations/examples within the subject matter to promote student interest in the curriculum. The researchers used this method for 25% of their assigned work. For example, they instituted homework (such as redecorating their bedroom, see Appendix D - H), within a given budget and drawing to scale; reflecting today's music with the representation of thoughts and feeling of the Revolutionary War; or, designing/making a game that could combine the use of mathematics with enjoyment.

Timetable

- Motivational Program – 1st quarter (4 weeks), 2nd and 3rd quarter – Total 22 weeks.
- Parental Contact – 2nd and 3rd quarter – Total 18 weeks.
- Targeted Homework – 3rd quarter – Total 9 weeks.

Assessment

The objective was to improve students' work habits through parental involvement. To document the extent of students' improved work habits, the number of first quarter late/missing assignments were compared to the number of second and third quarter's late/missing assignments. Additionally, the researchers were looking for improvement in attitudinal change from both the students and parents perspective. The results were compiled via a survey.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The targeted groups included 24 students from Site A, 25 Students from Site B, and 29 students from Site C, for a total of 78 students. Several different strategies were used with these targeted groups, resulting in an overall positive change. A motivational program was implemented first quarter at all three sites in an effort to increase all students' participation regarding timely assignments. During the second quarter, the researchers attempted to contact parents regarding missing homework, inappropriate/appropriate behavior, and positive growth within the classroom. This notification attempted to increase students' overall attitudes and performance in the school setting. The response of parental contact was positive at first; however, as the quarter progressed sites began to see varied responses in reference to the effectiveness of this procedure. In an attempt to achieve grater success in the third quarter, the researchers changed their teaching strategy to result in more relevant curriculum, i.e., targeted homework versus traditional. This was done in an effort to entice the students' appetite for learning.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The researchers found that most students' attitudes and performance increased progressively after all three programs where implemented simultaneously (see Figure 7). Additionally, the parental survey reflected a positive response from parents regarding their student's attitude about homework after parental notification was instituted (see Figure 8).

Behavioral Change

Mid-Term: Missing Assignments	Site A 23.6%	Site B 33%	Site C 31%
After Motivational Program and	21%	32%	31%
After Parental Contact and	13%	16%	17%
After Targeted Homework	8%	12%	14%

Figure 7: Percentage of Missing Assignments, Stages of Implementation

The percentages shown for the "mid-term" reflects the initial percentages of students missing work prior to any program being instituted. After mid-term the Motivational Program was implemented for the remainder of the first quarter and continued throughout the third quarter in conjunction with parental contact (second quarter) and targeted homework (third quarter). This percentage reflects no noticeable improvement in the number of students completing their homework on time. The researchers then inaugurated the program to contact parents on a regular basis in an attempt to improve students' behaviors and work habits. After completion of the second quarter, the researchers saw a dramatic decrease in the number of missing assignments. During the third quarter, the researchers implemented targeted homework. This program continued to significantly improve the number of missing assignments, which confirmed the effectiveness of our hypothesized problem.

Attitudinal Changes

Parental Notification	Site A	Site B	Site C
Percent of Parents Notified Quarterly	100%	100%	100%
Contact Times			
1-4 times	13%	16%	17%
5-8 times	74%	42%	72%
9-12+ times	13%	42%	11%
Contact			
positive	51%	46%	42%
negative	32%	33%	25%
both	17%	21%	33%

Figure 8: Parental Contact: Percent of times parents contacted throughout the second and third quarter.

The survey showed that the strategies used by teachers throughout the first three quarters of the school year made a difference in the student's overall attitude through the eyes of their parents. The researchers saw a 100% notification to parents. On the average, most parents fell between the 5-8-time notifications in a nine-week period.

Parent Survey:	Site A	Site B	Site C
Influence On Child			
positive	60%	69%	65%
negative	21%	11%	14%
both	19%	20%	21%
Improved School Attitude			
yes	89%	48%	46%
no	11%	52%	54%

Figure 9: Parent Survey (Appendix B): Student's attitudinal change toward schooling

In general, parents felt contact was positive and had a positive influence on their child. However, differences came when comparing increases in school attitudes. Site A had a definite increase in the attitudes of students attending that school as compared to Site B and Site C who saw a little less than 50% of a positive change in school attitude.

Student Survey:	Site A	Site B	Site C
Influence On Student			
positive	65%	60%	59%
negative	11%	15%	9%
both	8%	20%	27%
don't know	16%	5%	5%
Improved School Attitude			
yes	85%	61%	72%
no	13%	29%	21%
don't know	2%	10%	7%

Figure 10: Student Survey (Appendix C): Student's attitudinal change toward schooling

The researchers found that, in general, the students felt they were influenced in a positive manner and saw an improved attitude toward school. While the sites varied in their percentages, the overall response was fairly consistent and positive.

Discussion

In an attempt to affect the overall work habits and attitudes, the researchers developed three different strategies (H.O.M.E.W.O.R.K.P.A.R.T.Y., parental contact, and targeted homework), to incorporate over the first, second, and third quarter. These strategies focused on changing the behaviors of students and increasing the involvement of parents.

The first strategy implemented was the motivational program "H.O.M.E.W.O.R.K. P.A.R.T.Y.". While this program was easy to administer, the researchers found minimal results. Student response was ineffective and non-habit changing. This may in part be due to the fact

that it was the first program implemented and solely incorporated for the last four weeks of the first quarter. This strategy incorporated peer pressure and a motivational party to try to decrease the number of assignments a student had late or missing. The class earned a letter each time every student completed their homework assignment on time. They continue to spell out the motivational word until all letters were earned, then a party was given to that class. None of the sites administered a party. However, each site did see a slight decrease in late and missing work (see Figure 7).

The second strategy implemented was parental contact. This strategy proved to be highly beneficial toward both students' and parents' attitudes relative to homework and school, from the researchers standpoint. This program required intensive time and record-keeping for the researchers; however, positive results outweighed the time disadvantage. The time involved for Sites A, B, and C are listed below:

- Site A: Nine hours weekly (Friday folders, phone calls, personal notes, and record keeping).
- Site B: Six and three-quarters of an hour weekly (phone calls, personal notes, notes logged in students agenda, and record keeping).
- Site C: Eight and one-quarter of an hour weekly (phone calls, personal notes, notes logged in students agenda, and record keeping).

The researchers believe that the success was positive because it incorporated both programs simultaneously and additionally motivated other students intrinsically. The researchers felt it was imperative to maintain excellent records in order to communicate accurately and effectively with the parents. The log sheet (see Appendix D), kept records for each student in the targeted group and their improvement/decline regarding homework, behavior, and attitudes on a daily basis. Additionally, the date, time, length of conversation, and purpose for contact was logged when parental contact was made. Initially, the researchers kept their log after school and tried to

recall events that occurred throughout the day. However, it became difficult to remember isolated incidents; therefore, the researchers implemented a new plan to enable them to keep records during the day. Approximately two weeks after implementation of this strategy, the researchers carried the log sheet in a binder at all times. This allowed for documentation to be completed throughout the day.

Lastly, the researchers implemented the most effective plan, targeted homework. This strategy involved students actively participating in a student-centered classroom and increased student motivation. The targeted homework approach does not mean teachers should assign homework as an afterthought, i.e., busy work (assigning questions at the end of a chapter, failing to collect assigned homework/checking it, thereby quashing the importance of the assignment, or assigning undue homework for the sake of appeasing parents). Teacher preparation needs to encompass background information prior to giving an assignment. This usually requires reading pages from a textbook or supplemental material. Teachers should also differentiate the assignment for students with special needs and provide some students with material to assist them in their learning process. Extension activities also offer the opportunity for students to function at a higher level of thought. The researchers used many different methods to involve their students, i.e., cooperative learning projects, research papers, oral presentations, music to a historical event, and acting out a story. However, teachers will need to guide and monitor student's progress during these types of activities. Creativity is a must! Open-ended, out-of-class learning experiences allow students the opportunity to fuel their creative juices and increase their potential for learning. Extension and creative homework assignments often allow students to display their knowledge and ability in their preferred learning styles; therefore, it is important to encompass all multiple intelligences throughout lesson plans. The negative aspect of this program was that it required increased planning time to effectively create daily lessons and

homework relative to the student's daily lives, which encompassed creativity, enrichment, and elements of all the intelligences. Success was found largely as a result of the incremental approach implemented by the researchers. The program was designed to gradually encompass multi-faceted levels of involvement of all parties concerned in the students' educational process.

Recommendations

Prior to implementing this incremental plan, discussion and prior approval with the building Principal will be needed. The cost of this plan is minimal, but results are highly beneficial. The researchers found that time management was essential to build an effective program. Parental contact required, at minimum, two additional hours per week for all paperwork, phone calls, and record-keeping needed. Also, time was a factor with targeted homework since lesson plans must be designed to motivate and incorporate interest to students' daily lives. Input from other school personnel regarding projects and suggestions for student-centered activities may be needed to expand the repertoire of ideas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Sample of Teacher Survey

TEACHER SURVEY

HELP! HELP! HELP! I need your assistance! Please quickly fill out this survey to assist me in a requirement for my Masters Program.

Return to _____ by _____

1. Is late work from students a problem for you? YES NO

2. Are missing assignments from students a problem for you? YES NO

3. Are there consequence for the missing/late work? YES NO
   If yes, please briefly summarize:

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Do you believe consistent parental contact would improve the students status concerning missing/late assjgnments? YES NO

5. Do you think missing/late assignments affect a students' grade by at least one letter grade? YES NO

Appendix B
Sample of Parent Attitudinal Survey

PARENT ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

Please read the following questions and circle the best answer.

What affect did the communication between your child's teacher and you have regarding your influence on your child's late/missing assignments?

POSITIVE NEGATIVE BOTH

What affect did the communication between your child's teacher and you have regarding your child's attitude concerning school?

POSITIVE NEGATIVE BOTH

Please add any additional comments you may have.

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C
Sample of Student Attitudinal Survey

STUDENT ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

Please read the following questions and circle the best answer.

What affect did the communication between your teacher, parent, and you have regarding your influence on your late/missing assignments?

POSITIVE NEGATIVE BOTH

What affect did the communication between your teacher, parent, and you have regarding your attitude concerning school?

POSITIVE NEGATIVE BOTH

Please add any additional comments you may have.

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D
Sample of Student Log Sheet

STUDENT NAME: **DATE:**

Homework Status:

Behavior (circle one): **Excellent** **Good** **Fair** **Poor**

Comments:_____

_____

_____

Attitude (circle one): **Positive** **Negative** **Neutral**

Comments:_____

_____

_____

PARENT CONTACT (circle one) **Friday Folder** **Agenda** **Note** **Phone**

Person Contacted:_____

Date: _____ **Time:**_____

Length of Conversation:

Purpose/Results:_____

_____

_____

_____

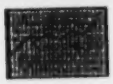
Appendix E

THE BEDROOM TASK

Subject Area: Mathematics Unit on Area – 7th grade **Timeline:** 3 weeks

Major Goals of Unit:

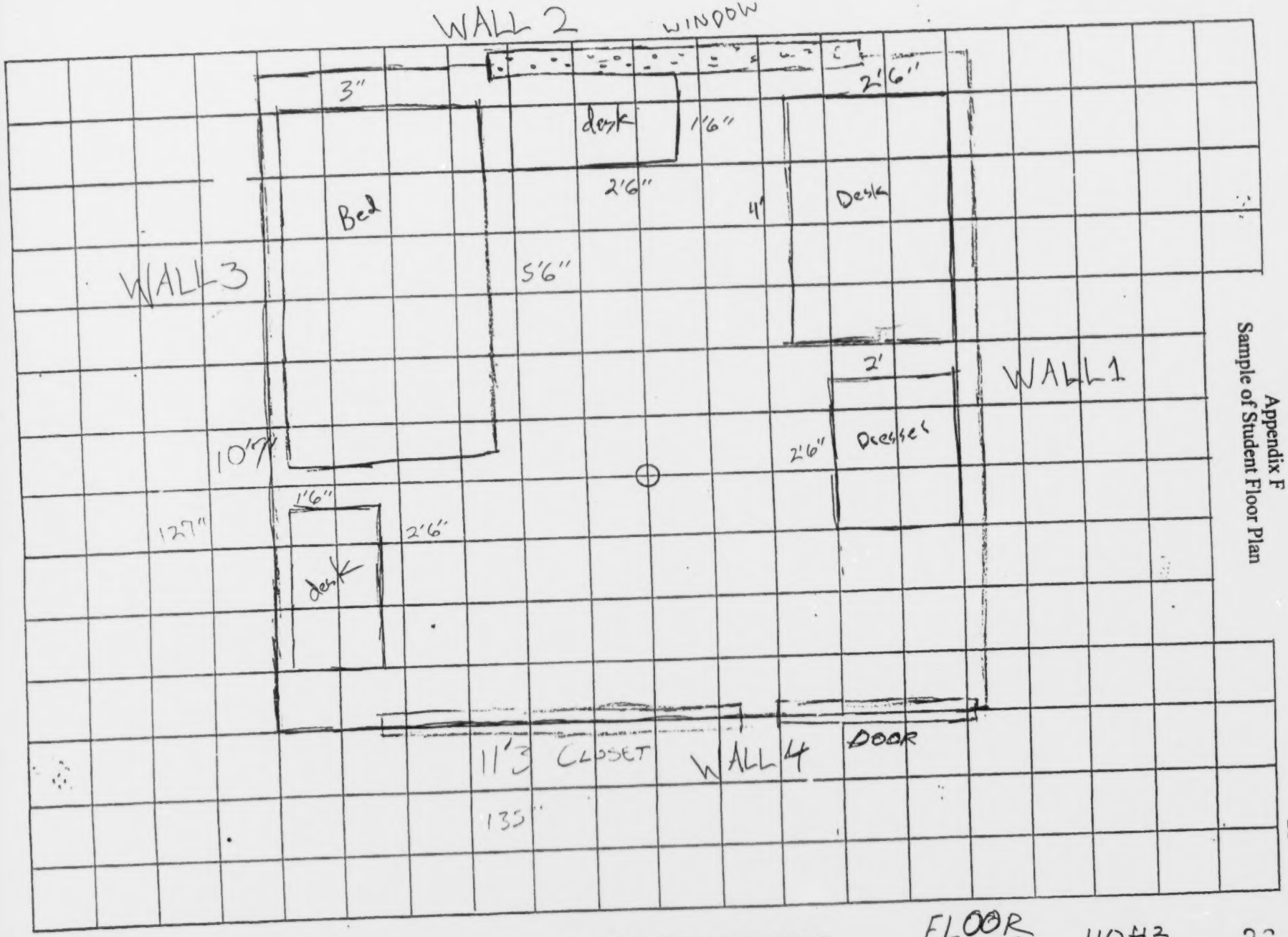
1. Draw bedroom walls and floor to ½" scale
2. Convert area measurements to ½" scale
3. Demonstrate ability to work within a budget

Verbal/Linguistic	Logical/Mathematical	Visual/Spatial	Bodily/Kinesthetic
Oral presentation on redecorating Explain to a partner how you calculated your rooms area Share/discuss with your group problems you are experiencing.	 Convert measurement to ½" scale Calculate cost to stay within a specified budget Calcualte total area to cover with paint, carpet etc.	Draw a scale drawing of bedroom Select carpet, curtains, wallcovering, and bedroom ensemble. Imagine your room after successfully completing this task	Design your new bedroom Physically measure your walls and floors Look through magazines, wallpaper books, paint samples, catalogs, etc., for ideas on redecorating your room
Musical/Rhythmic	**Interpersonal**	**Intrapersonal**	**Naturalist**
Play radio while students work Discuss advertising jingles and their affect on consumers Develop a jingle to remember the area formula	Solve problems experienced while calculating in group Describe what you did with a partner Have groups calculate area of the cafeteria	Use math concepts beyond school by asking What? So What? and Now What? Reflect on your strengths and weakness with this project Use guided imagery	Discuss environmental impact of throwing old materials away when purchasing new. Discuss putting plants in bedroom and advantage/disadvantage Discuss the smell of a new bedroom i.e., paint carpet, etc.

1. Whole-class learning experiences:
2. Whole-class assessment for learning experiences:

Draw scale drawing of bedroom	Redecorate within given budget	Convert measurements ½" scale	Complete "The Bedroom Task"
↕	↕	↕	↕
Rubric to assess each one	Rubric to assess each one	Rubric to assess each one	Teacher-made assessment

3. Culminating event for unit: Oral presentation from each student of their new room describing the changes they made.



Appendix F
Sample of Student Floor Plan

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Appendix G
Sample of Budget Worksheet

Budget Worksheet

	Total Sq ft (wall/floor)	Sq Ft window/closet	Actual Sq Ft (total sq ft - door/window)	Cost of Item (per/sq ft)	Total Cost	Money Given $812.22	Money Left
Wall 1	84 ft²		84 ft²	.04	$3.36		$808.86
Wall 2	104 ft²		104 ft²	.04	$4.16		$804.07
Wall 3	84 ft²	20 ft²	64 ft²	.04	$2.56		$802.14
Wall 4	104 ft²	63 ft²	41 ft²	.04	$1.64		$800.05
Wall							
Floor				$30.53	30.53		$719.11
Bed Ensemble				$109.97	$109.97		$609.14
Window Treatment				$9.99 (x2)	$19.98		$589.16

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Appendix H

RUBRIC FOR "THE BEDROOM TASK"

Name: _____ Date: _____

Performance Task: You must draw your bedroom to scale using ½" = 1 foot.

Goal/Standard: Your turned in drawing must include all 4 walls and the floor plan. The wall must have windows, doors, closets, etc., indicated on the wall plan and drawn to scale. The Floor plan must show bed, dresser, desk, or any other items that take up floor space (these must also be drawn to scale).

Score (1-5) Score 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

Drawing/Scale ♦ Wall I ♦ Wall II ♦ Wall III ♦ Wall IV ♦ Floor Accuracy/Dimension ♦ Wall I ♦ Wall II ♦ Wall III ♦ Wall IV ♦ Floor	Score:_____x1 = _____ (25) Score:_____x1 = _____ (25)
Conversion to ½" scale ♦ Wall I ♦ Wall II ♦ Wall III ♦ Wall IV ♦ Floor	Score:_____x1 = _____ (25)
Drawings included Windows/outlets, etc. ♦ Wall I ♦ Wall II ♦ Wall III ♦ Wall IV ♦ Floor	Score:_____x1 = _____ (25)
Scale: 90-100 = A, 89-80 = B, 79-70 = C, 69-60 = D	TOTAL SCORE: _____ (100)

Comments:

Appendix I

PMI

Write how you feel about the topic: The Bedroom Task

PLUS (+)	MINUS (-)	INTERESTING (?)